

The President's Daily Brief

18 September 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Communist resistance has stiffened against South Vietnamese clearing operations in the western delta.
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Egyptian downing of an Israeli reconnaissance plane is almost certain to draw an Israeli response.
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The new civilian cabinet in East Pakistan is not likely to win much Bengali support. (Page 3)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

During the past two weeks, elements of three Communist regiments have been engaged in a running battle with South Vietnamese forces in the U Minh Forest area. Although taking severe casualties, the government forces have sought contact whenever the Communists have tried to mass their forces, thus disrupting enemy battle plans and inflicting substantial casualties. The Communist attacks represent the most vigorous enemy effort since the South Vietnamese entered the Forest in strength some ten months ago. [REDACTED] the Communists may also mount attacks in other areas of the delta in support of the U Minh campaign.

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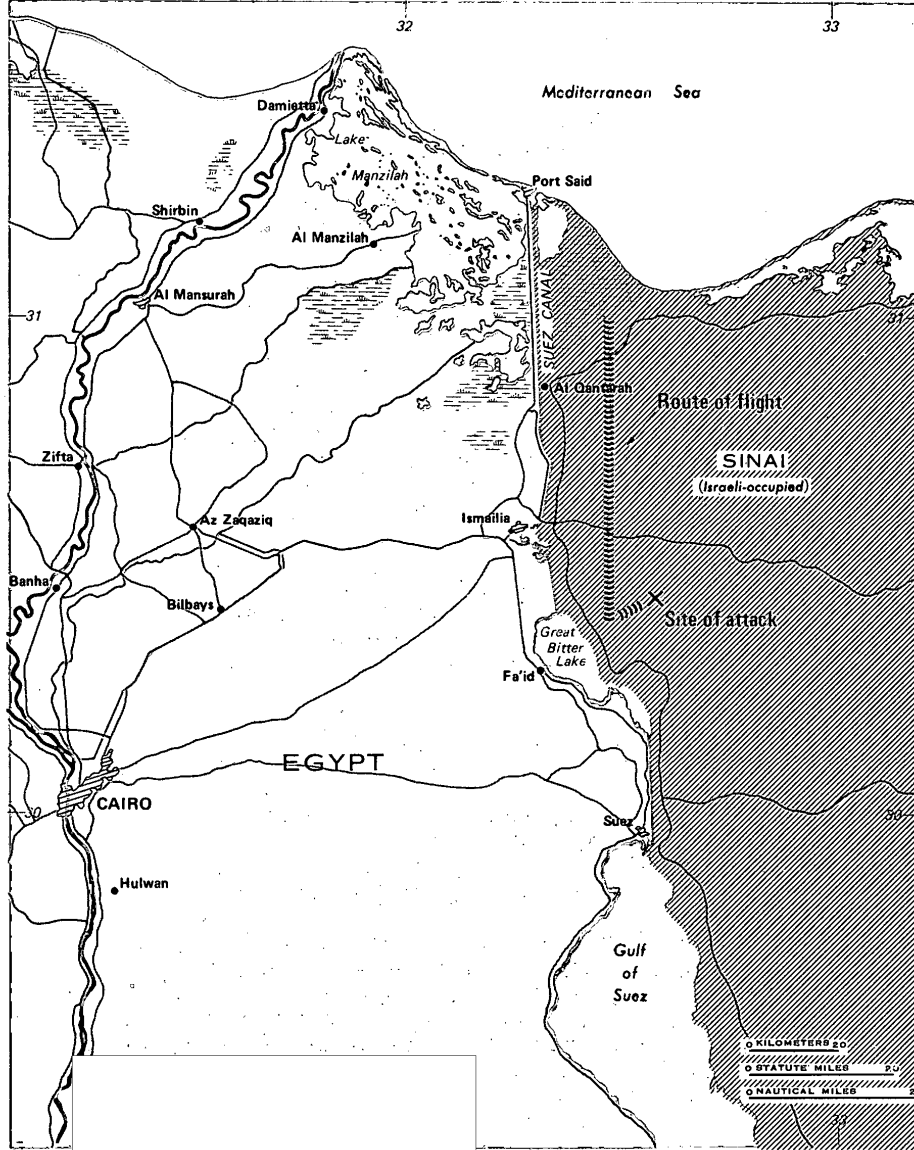
More tough fighting appears in store. The Communists show no signs of backing off, a significant departure from the pattern of fighting in the South for most of this year. The South Vietnamese also are showing no signs of tiring and have performed reasonably well so far, according to US advisers.

In addition to countering the South Vietnamese operations, the Communist attacks may be in response to the appeals from higher commands for increased action before Thieu's referendum on 3 October.

Enemy units elsewhere in South Vietnam may launch additional brief attacks in strength. The area near the DMZ remains the most threatened area despite the recent withdrawal of some of the enemy's forces to southern North Vietnam. Three enemy divisions are near the DMZ and any of these could move south on short notice. Saigon's Lam Son 810 operation in western Quang Tri Province may further inhibit the North Vietnamese from returning to this battlefield in the near future. Enemy units may also increase offensive activity in the central highlands and other regions, but this is not likely until after the monsoon rains ease in mid-October.

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Israeli Aircraft Shot Down



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ISRAEL-EGYPT

An Israel Defense Forces spokesman informed US officials in Tel Aviv that an Israeli C-97 reconnaissance aircraft had been shot down yesterday by an Egyptian SA-2 missile. The Israeli plane was said to have been on a photographic reconnaissance mission and was well on the east side of the canal when it was hit.

The Egyptian action seems likely to have been in retaliation for the loss of an SU-7 to Israeli ground fire on 11 September. In view of Dayan's denunciation of the shoot-down as premeditated and a provocative act, the Israelis will almost certainly strike back. Egypt's use of missiles might well provoke them to respond with a strike on Egyptian SAM sites.

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NOTES

Pakistan: The civilian cabinet appointed in East Pakistan yesterday is not likely to be of much help in the government's efforts to win popular support among Bengalis. Although the cabinet is composed exclusively of East Pakistanis--most of whom have been fairly prominent--only two are former members of the Awami League, which swept elections in East Pakistan last December, and these two are regarded as turncoats by many Bengalis. The others represent parties that did badly in the elections, and many Bengalis will regard their appointment as more of Yahya's efforts to disguise continued army control of the East wing.

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